

Bargaining With Criminals.

By Victor Rousseau.

That the police can make no headway against the professional criminal in New York City, that a proportion ranging from fifty to ninety-four per cent., in inverse ratio to the seriousness of the offence, escape punishment, has been demonstrated in recent issues of Harper's Weekly. In these articles stress was laid in particular on the fact that it is in most cases an impossibility to procure evidence sufficient to secure an indictment from the grand jury; that, when such indictments can be obtained, the criminal can protract the issue till witnesses have disappeared, forfeit his bail, obtain acquittal, or otherwise evade the law.

This is not denied by the police authorities; but there is another phase of the affair to be taken into consideration, and that is the custom of allowing prisoners charged with felonies to plead guilty to a much lower offence than that charged in the indictment.

"People are prone to find fault with the police," remarked an official at headquarters, "and never stop to think that the police are only a small factor in the prosecution of criminals, and that their work can be practically nullified by the inactivity of other officials of the city government."

The charge is, in brief, this: that on account of the numerous bail cases constantly awaiting trial, which threaten to clog the slowly moving machinery of justice, the District Attorney's office bargains with criminals under indictment, permitting them to plead guilty to an offence much less serious than that with which they are charged, rather than go through the protracted formula of a trial.

For example, in the month of January the cases of six men awaiting trial upon the charge of murder in the first degree were disposed of very expeditiously in the courts of New York County. Their names are Pasquale di Monaco, Francesco Vonella, Agusto Bianchi, Frank Rice, Stephen MacKoyak, and Enrique de Lara. Each of these men had slain a fellow man in some fashion—by shooting, stabbing, or slashing. The police had evidence which would have sufficed to send some of them, at least, to the electric chair. But the calendar was crowded; the results of the trials might be uncertain; and so, by arrangement with the office of the District Attorney, they were "sent up" for periods ranging from about ten to twenty years each—and justice was satisfied.

It is claimed by the police that from twenty to thirty of such cases occur every day, and that the crowded condition of the courts makes this necessary. They have a diurnal list of them to prove their contention. Here, for example, are a few instances extracted from the record of a single day; the names are fictitious, but the records exist on file at Police Headquarters:

John Busch, charged with grand larceny in the second degree; maximum sentence, five years' imprisonment; pleaded guilty to petty larceny; sentence suspended.

George Washington White, charged with assault in the first degree; maximum sentence, ten years' imprisonment; pleaded guilty to assault in the third degree; sentenced to a year's imprisonment.

Giuseppe Panetella, charged with robbery in the first degree; maximum sentence, twenty years; pleaded guilty to receiving stolen goods; sentenced to one year's imprisonment.

"All the crooks know that the District Attorney will permit them to plead guilty to a lesser crime than

that with which they are charged," said an official at Police Headquarters. They say that they have to, in order to keep the calendar clear.

There is one Part of General Sessions in particular where this is done—I think it changes from time to time as the judge is changed. Some judges, of course, have the reputation of being much "easier" than others. Crooks hate to go before Judge Mulqueen or Judge Rosalsky, or Judges Dyke and Aspinall in Brooklyn, who hand out stiff sentences. Judge Mulqueen will impose a sentence of twenty years without turning a hair. Some of the politicians won't speak to him now.

"Every morning, in the Criminal Court Building, one of the court officers goes along in front of the prisoners, who are lined up in front of the pens, shouting, 'Who wants to take a plea?' Then the crooksicker with the deputy assistants.

"What'll I get if I take this plea?" asks one.

"Three years," says the officer.

"Nothing doing; I'll take a year," says the crook. And generally he gets away with it.

"Good crooks can get bail to the amount of twenty thousand dollars or more. Men may be out on bail two or three years before their cases are called, and stealing all the while."

There are at present one hundred and twenty-seven persons on bail whose indictments were filed prior to January 1, 1908. Two of these were indicted prior to 1901. Forty-three who were indicted in 1905 have still to be tried; eighty-two have been out on bail since 1906; all other crooks who are free on bail have been under indictment for a period of a single year or less.—Harper's Weekly.

He Bought Books.

A man who had never had the time or opportunity to get much book learning suddenly became wealthy. He gave up work, built himself a fine house, and settled down to enjoy life. Recollecting his early and unanswered longing for books, he went to a shop to order some. The Voter tells the story.

"I want a lot of books," he said to the clerk.

"What kind of books?" was the reply.

"Why, books," said the prospective purchaser. "Good books you know; reading books."

The books came and were installed in the library. Soon after an old friend, slightly more learned than the rich man, came to call.

"Here, Hugh," said the host, "is my library. Here is where I intend to sit down with my books and read."

Hugh took down a book, looked at it and put it back; took down another, looked at it and put it back, and repeated the process several times.

Then he asked, "John, where did you get these books?"

"Oh, I bought them; just bought them. What's the matter? Aren't they good books? I haven't read them yet."

"They're good books," was the reply, "but they're all the same. John, as near as I can figure roughly, you have bought 600 copies of the Fifth Reader. It's a good book, but there's too many of it here—far too many."

A 200 Pound Amethyst.

An amethyst which it is believed is the largest in the United States has been sold by Alexander Meads, a pioneer prospector of this city, to F. R. Vigeant of Sault Ste. Marie. It weighs 200 pounds.

The stone was found in a cave on the north shore of Lake Superior forty-five years ago and it has been in Mr. Mead's possession ever since. The numerous conical projections are exceptionally well formed and are coated with an eighth of an inch of iron ore. The next largest amethyst of which there is record is in the Central Park Museum in New York city. It weighs 130 pounds.—Marquette correspondence Milwaukee Sentinel.

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